

PRESERVATION Alabama Historical Commission REPORT

VOL. 34, NO. 4

JULY-AUGUST 2007

ALABAMA'S PLACES IN PERIL

11 Sites Selected Most Endangered

Since 1994, the Alabama Historical Commission and the Alabama Trust for Historic Preservation have joined forces to sponsor *Places in Peril*, a program designed to highlight some of Alabama's most significant endangered historic sites. Modeled after the National Trust for Historic Preservation's program, this year's list features 11 endangered sites.

"*Places in Peril* is a valuable tool in directing public attention to the many cultural resources in Alabama under threat from neglect or demolition," said John A. Neubauer, AHC executive director.

"Being listed as a significant historic endangered site carries no formal protection, but it can help generate the local support necessary for the sustained preservation of these resources," said Barbara Adkins, ATHP president.

HISTORIC IRON AND STEEL TRUSS BRIDGES Statewide

Once commonplace along the highways and byways of the state, iron and steel truss bridges are rapidly disappearing.

Often structurally deteriorated and no longer wide enough or able to handle the weight of modern traffic, the bridges are being replaced with modern bridges. While these new bridges offer improved safety and utility, they rarely possess the picturesque character and visual qualities exhibited by the historic iron and steel truss bridges they replace.

As once-useful structures, the preservation of iron and steel truss bridges is often hampered by their outdated use. An alternative to demolition is the continued maintenance and service of active, safe bridges that meet current use requirements.

SOUTH PERRY STREET HISTORIC DISTRICT Montgomery

The city of Montgomery has lost many of its important historic commercial buildings over the years. Deferred maintenance and demolition threaten a large section of the South Perry Street Historic District, listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1984.

Current redevelopment plans include the construction of a new parking deck. The city recently purchased many of the South Perry Street buildings and evicted the remaining tenants. Demolition of these buildings may happen soon.

South Perry Street illustrates a century of Montgomery's commercial architecture. The city does have a choice to save these important historic resources. With a new downtown master plan and revitalization efforts underway, Montgomery has an opportunity to capitalize on its unique commercial architecture.

WINTERBORO HIGH SCHOOL Talladega County

From the beginning, Winterboro High School has been a community building. Community members helped construct the school in 1927 by carrying rocks to the site.

For 80 years, it served the community as a place of learning. Now the community is trying to save the school from possible demolition.

Because the old structure needs repairs and expansion, questions are now being asked: how much of the original building should be saved? If a new school is constructed behind the old, could the old building be adapted to a new use? To address these issues, the Talladega County Board of Education formed a committee of preservationists, school board members, administrators, teachers, parents, and students to look at different options. Many good ideas are being considered and hopefully a resolution will soon be found.

ST. CLAIR SPRINGS HISTORIC DISTRICT St. Clair County

Alabama travelers have sought the healing mineral waters of St. Clair Springs since the mid-19th century. Summer cottages, boarding houses, and hotels were built after the area became a resort destination during the 1890s. Even after its popularity waned, many – including generations of the same family – stayed on to live in this quiet community.

Today, new development pressures and the deterioration of some of its historic buildings threaten the character of the St. Clair Springs Historic District listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1976.



A historic bridge in Walker County

AIRCRAFT HANGAR AT GRAGG FIELD HISTORIC DISTRICT Clanton, Chilton County

For many years, the WPA aircraft hangar at Gragg Field served the Chilton County Airport. Today, this abandoned structure has a collapsed metal wall and a roof open to the elements. With no funds for repair and maintenance, its prospects for reuse are not good. Still, local preservationists believe the old airport hangar is worth saving.

Constructed in 1937, the hangar is a contributing resource within the Gragg Field Historic District, one of

the few airports in Alabama to be listed in the National Register of Historic Places (2004). The district is significant for its role in aviation history as well as for its association with the Works Progress Administration (the hangar was constructed as a WPA project) and the Tuskegee Army Airfield.

Resources related to aviation history have received little attention until recent years. Recognizing the significance of the airport hangar and the urgency of its condition are important first steps to saving it.

(continued on p. 2)

FROM THE COMMISSION

New Members Appointed

The Alabama Historical Commission welcomes new members:

LaVerne Wright represents the Historic Chattahoochee Commission (HCC) and serves as president of the organization that promotes 18 counties in Alabama and Georgia. A current HCC goal is the designation of the Chattahoochee Trace National Heritage Corridor.

Ann Bedsole of Mobile is owner of Bedsole Farms, is chairman of the distribution committee for the Sybil H. Smith Charitable Trust, and serves as president and chairman of the board for White Smith Land Company, Inc.

William F. Denson, III is senior vice president, general counsel, and secretary of Vulcan Materials Company in Birmingham.

Frank Grant of Midway represents ALFA on the AHC board. He recently retired as partner with Bracewell and Grant Timber and is a former president of the Barbour County Farmer's Federation.

Employee of the Quarter

Betty Missildine, a clerk at the Alabama State Capitol Goat Hill Museum Store, is recognized for her generous response to a difficult situation.

(continued on p. 2)

PLACES IN PERIL *continued from p. 1*

EDGEWOOD COMMUNITY Birmingham

Nothing can erode the character and integrity of a neighborhood more quickly than losing its original building stock. The Edgewood neighborhood and business district in Homewood is one place facing pressure to 'tear down' its historic houses and commercial structures for bigger and newer buildings.

The rapid growth of the community threatens its treasured architecture, cultural diversity, and affordable housing market.

But it is not too late. Residents can fight back to save what is important. Identifying those elements through survey and registration efforts, improved local preservation ordinances, and design review may have an impact on future decisions. Money used for new development might also be used for preservation and adaptive reuse.

CARRAWAY HOUSE Birmingham

Residents both old and new in Birmingham's Norwood district appreciate their neighborhood and are committed to preserving it, but the future of one Norwood landmark is in peril.

The Carraway House, a fine two-story Craftsman-style residence, has been vacant for many years and is suffering from damage and neglect. To make things worse, a recent upstairs fire destroyed about a third of the roof subjecting it to the elements.

Designed by Salie and Mewhinney, the Carraway house was originally constructed in 1916 by T. S. Abernethy, president of the Strand Theater Company. In 1933, Dr. Charles N. Carraway, a physician and founder of Carraway Hospital, purchased the house from Abernethy. The house changed ownership over the years but it wasn't until recently when the house fell into disrepair.

The Norwood neighborhood is looking for ways to obtain and stabilize the property. Several community development corporations have expressed interest in working with the neighborhood. If successful, a restored Carraway House could anchor the neighborhood and function again as a beautiful and useful building.

BIBB COUNTY JAIL Centerville

The old Bibb County Jail is an ailing landmark looking for a cure. After the county constructed a new facility, the old jail was abandoned without a new tenant. Storm damage, deferred maintenance, and neglect have taken a great toll on the building.

Demolition was considered but the old jail was spared when demolition bids came in too high. The building continues to be endangered

although the community would like to see it restored and useful again.

Mississippi architect, A. S. Hull, designed the Bibb County Jail in 1910. The structure visually compliments the nearby courthouse, a grand Renaissance Revival building also designed by Hull. Both buildings contribute to the Centerville Historic District which is listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

The "Better Hometown Group," a city coalition, is trying to purchase the old jail in hopes of turning it into a county museum. However, the city is willing to consider other plans that may adapt the building to a new use.

OLD CHURCH OF THE EPIPHANY (EPISCOPAL) Guntersville, Marshall County

The former Episcopal Church of the Epiphany (1917-18) is an important example of the "carpenter's Gothic" architectural style which became a signature of many small Episcopal congregations of the late-19th and very early-20th centuries.

When the congregation completed a larger church in 1990, the church building and the parish house were turned over to the City of Guntersville for use as an art museum complex.

Today the old church and parish house are scheduled for demolition by the neighboring First Baptist Church for use as a parking lot.

Sentiment to preserve the structure is strong, but as yet no feasible plan of action has been developed. One local obstacle is the general perception that the significance of the structure is primarily "sentimental." The building's architectural significance from a state perspective is still little understood or appreciated.

BARCLIFT INN Blountsville, Blount County

The old Huntsville-to-Tuscaloosa stagecoach road was the "Interstate 65" of the 1830s. The road then linked north Alabama's largest town, Huntsville, to the state capital of Tuscaloosa. The stage road ran directly through Blountsville, where weary travelers could pass the night at the inn run by Judge James Hendricks before continuing on their way north or southward.

Known as the Barclift Inn since the early 1900s, this sturdy two-story structure is one of the state's few remaining stagecoach stops dating from around 1836. Commercial encroachment threatens the inn which is now for sale.

SUNNY SLOPE Auburn, Lee County

An oasis of leafy tranquility amid sprawling new apartment complexes, Sunny Slope is a reminder of an earlier Auburn – the straggling rural village of the 1850s. In those days, Sunny Slope was the center of a 2,000-acre plantation on the edge of

town. Its architecture expresses the distinctive brand of Greek Revival architecture that flourished a decade or so before the Civil War.

Sunny Slope, which was the boyhood home of Alabama Governor William Samford (1844-1901), is one of only a handful of such dwellings still standing. Situated on a wooded five-acre site, Sunny Slope is threatened by both residential and commercial encroachment.

Sensitive development of the surrounding acreage while preserving the house as a visual centerpiece is one proposed way to accommodate perhaps inevitable development while preserving a rare relic from Auburn's earliest days.

FROM THE COMMISSION

continued from p. 1

During a hectic tour day, Missildine drove a Mobile teacher to a local store to purchase a change of clothes for a student who had become ill while traveling to Montgomery on a field trip. "This says a lot about Betty as she is by nature a quiet, yet kind and gentle person who is always eager to help and does so without fanfare or want of recognition," said Trina Binkley, Goat Hill manager. As such Betty's act of kindness is deserving of recognition as Employee of the Quarter.

ALABAMA HISTORIC CEMETERY REGISTER ADDITIONS --- *Marker Dedication in Brewton*

The cemetery register is a prestigious listing of historic cemeteries in Alabama. These selected cemeteries are worthy of both recognition and preservation. Contact Lee Anne Wofford, cemetery program coordinator, at (334) 230-2559 or leeanne.wofford@preserveala.org.

The following cemeteries were added to the Alabama Historic Cemetery Register between January and May 2007.

Franklin Cemetery, Butler County
Craig Hill Cemetery, Dallas County
Kimbell Cemetery, Morgan County
Old Sullivan Community Cemetery, Escambia County
Jonathan C. Camp Cemetery, Jackson County
Jenkins Cemetery, Madison County
Gurley City Cemetery, Madison County
White City Cemetery, Autauga County
Collier Cemetery, Madison County
Mark Phillips Cemetery, Etowah County
Asbury Cemetery, Autauga County
Stoudenmire Cemetery, Autauga County
Whetstone-DeBardelaben Cemetery, Autauga County
Old Center Cemetery, Henry County
Sand Ridge Baptist Church Cemetery, Dallas County

AHC Historical Marker Dedicated in Brewton's Union Cemetery

City officials, historical society members, and cemetery enthusiasts gathered May 15 in **Union Cemetery in Brewton** to dedicate the newest Alabama Historical Commission cemetery historical marker. Steve Yuhasz of the City of Brewton presided over the ceremony. Mayor Ted Jennings spoke of the importance of Union Hill Cemetery in Brewton's history and how cities across Alabama should take responsibility for cemeteries in their jurisdiction. AHC cemetery program coordinator Lee Anne Wofford gave remarks on behalf of the AHC. Mayor Jennings unveiled the marker to hearty applause.



SUNNY SLOPE



REHABS APPROVED FOR TAX CREDITS

So far in fiscal year 2007, owners of seven historic buildings in Alabama completed certified rehabilitations. A certified rehabilitation is a project approved by the National Park Service because it complies with historic preservation standards and owners of these projects earn tax credits for their good work.

The Federal Rehabilitation Tax Credit program provides a 20% credit to taxpayers who rehabilitate historic buildings used for income-producing purposes. Owners complete applications before their projects begin to insure their property is eligible for the program and to insure their proposal is approved.

Fort McClellan Recreation Center Complex in Anniston (above photo) includes three buildings rehabilitated as a theatre, an exhibit hall, and a restaurant. Distinctive Spanish Colonial Revival features were carefully restored to create rich interiors for the new functions.

A deteriorated roof threatened the **McCants House** in the Five Points South area in Birmingham. Now rehabbed for office use, the new owner restored the character-defining slate roof and tower.

The **Rialto Theatre** in Birmingham is rehabilitated for commercial and residential use. Owners retained and stabilized beautiful plaster remnants from the building's theatre days to create dramatic interiors.

Taylor Carriage Company Building in downtown Birmingham is rehabilitated for office and residential use. Owners lovingly restored the wooden stair and ceilings and reopened the skylight on the roof.

One Mobile Plaza in Florence is rehabilitated for offices. The monumental stair and historic doors were restored to maintain the character of the spaces.

Hotel Russel Erskine in Huntsville continues its use as elderly housing. Old photographs allowed the owners to replicate the original hotel sign and restore the lobby and ballroom to their former glory.

Montgomery's **Schloss and Kahn Building** is office space. Owners of the old warehouse took advantage of the heavy timber interior structure and brick walls to create interesting offices for themselves and their tenants.

The owners' financial investment and dedication to rehabilitating these historic buildings are rewarded with historic preservation tax incentives. Everyone benefits from the continued life of these structures--from the enjoyment of the the building, the street, and the historic districts in which the buildings are located.

Contact *Chloe Mercer* at chloe.mercer@preserveala.org, (334) 230-2669, or see the *Tax Credits* section of the website at www.preserveala.org.

Recent Additions to the Alabama Register

The Alabama Register is an official listing of buildings, sites, structures, objects, and districts. These properties, which may be of national, state, and local significance, are deemed worthy of preservation by the Alabama Historical Commission.

The following sites were added to the Alabama Register on April 18:

.Searcy School, Greenville vicinity (Butler County)
.Dulaney AME Church and Cemetery, Camden vicinity (Wilcox County)
.Keener Voting House, Keener (Etowah County)
.Anthony Hughes House, Buhl (Tuscaloosa County)
.James Hughes Farm District, Buhl (Tuscaloosa County)
.LaGarde Properties District, Anniston (Calhoun County)
.Camwood (The Noble-Woodruff House), Anniston (Calhoun County)
.Bethel Primitive Baptist Church and Cemetery, Andalusia (Covington County)
.First National Bank of Florala (Fidelity Masonic Lodge No. 685), Florala (Covington County)
.Roxana United Methodist Church and Cemetery, Camp Hill (Lee Co.)
.R. W. Harris & Son General Merchandise Store and Warehouse, Winfield (Marion County)
.Captain Jackson-Bottomlee House, Langston (Jackson County)
.Sunshine and Dorothy Morton House, Brierfield Ironworks Historical State Park (Bibb County)

CORRECTIONS HELPS AHC'S BELLE MONT

Alabama Correctional Industries, a division of the Alabama Department of Corrections, recently lent a hand to the long-term, phased restoration of Belle Mont in Tusculumbia.

A crew, made up of prisoners and their supervisors, worked on the courtyard and the new stairs leading to it. They also replaced undersized gutters and downspouts to improve drainage away from Belle Mont's historic brick walls.



While providing construction services, the men practiced skills that will help them find employment after they have served their sentences. "I have been very pleased with their work and the diligence of their supervisors," said Melissa Beasley, Belle Mont site director.

Belle Mont is one of Alabama's most distinguished houses, an outstanding example of Thomas Jefferson's influence upon the architecture of the early American republic. Characteristics of the Palladian or "Jeffersonian style" are an accent upon high-quality brickwork with contrasting wood trim, a preference for hilltop building sites, and designs that show Jefferson's reverence for the neoclassical architectural ideas of Italian Renaissance architect Andrea Palladio. Belle Mont exhibits all these qualities and more.

A raised, two-story central section with flanking one-story wings is typical of both Jefferson and of Palladian architecture in general. So is the U-shaped floor plan in which the side-wings project to the rear to embrace a courtyard. Belle Mont's floor plan mirrors these elements. A very similar plan is in fact preserved among Jefferson's drawings housed at Harvard University.

PARK DAY 2007

The volunteer spirit is alive and well at Old Cahawba! On Saturday, April 7, Old Cahawba Archaeological Park participated in Park Day, a nationwide volunteer effort dedicated to cleaning and restoring America's Civil War sites. Sponsored by the Civil War Preservation Trust in partnership with the History Channel and Take Pride in America, this event has provided much needed labor to some of our country's most important historic treasures for eleven years running.

Members of the surrounding communities of Orrville and Selma answered the call Easter weekend, with the 16 concerned citizens who turned out truly representing a cross section of the populace. Volunteers, young and old, included members of Selma Boy Scout Troop No. 46, the Col. C. C. Pegues Chapter of the Sons of Confederate Veterans Camp No. 62, and the Selma-Dallas County Historic Preservation Society.

With their assistance, the Old Cahawba staff was able to clear trash and scrap metal from newly acquired land, a two-acre block in the heart of this former state capital. Trailers, sheds, stoves, and even a mobile home were among the disposed items. In all, some 23 tons of debris were removed from the park that day.

Old Cahawba has long depended on the community, the diverse groups of people who call Cahawba their own. These volunteers left with a sense of satisfaction and accomplishment that day, ready to do it again when called upon next year.

Jonathan Matthews
 Old Cahawba Archaeological Site



Photo: Cassandra Mickens, Selma Times Journal

UWA PROVIDES INTERNS FOR HISTORIC SITES

At a time when funding for paid staff in many Alabama historical sites is dwindling, the University of West Alabama's (UWA) Department of History has teamed up with the Alabama Historical Commission and UWA's Center for the Study of the Black Belt to offer internships in historic preservation.

UWA currently sends graduate students to two historic sites, Magnolia Grove in Greensboro and Gaineswood in Demopolis, providing students with valuable hands-on experience in historical research and preservation, in addition to classroom credit. In turn, the sites receive highly skilled students to assist with a variety of museum functions that may otherwise be deferred due to staff shortages.

Eleanor Cunningham, Magnolia Grove site director, and Dr. Joe Wilkins, former UWA dean of graduate studies, began the collaboration in the fall of 2005, when Magnolia Grove was facing staff layoffs due to budget constraints.

Graduate student Lakeisha Croxton of Forkland is currently serving as the historic preservation intern at Gaineswood and Angelina Sprye of Boligee is interning at Magnolia Grove. They each spend at least five hours a week at their assigned sites working directly with the Alabama Historical Commission's site directors.

"The internship in historic preservation has been a tremendous benefit," Cunningham said. "Some of their projects have included processing manuscript collections and entering data into



Angelina Sprye visits with a first grader from Greensboro West Elementary. At the time, Magnolia Grove's facade was undergoing restoration work.

collections management software. This semester, Angelina is developing lesson plans that integrate Magnolia Grove's interpretive themes into the Alabama social studies curriculum."

Sprye says she is learning valuable lessons from the internship. Accordingly, she hopes her lesson plans will inspire younger students to take an interest in preservation. "With the plans I am developing, the students will learn about the history of the home, the lifestyle of its residents, and its architecture," Sprye said. "If the students are enlightened by the study, they may consider a career in historic preservation."

HURRICANE KATRINA RELIEF GRANTS TO BE MADE AVAILABLE

Congress has appropriated \$43 million for historic preservation projects to provide disaster relief in the states of Alabama, Louisiana, and Mississippi affected by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita which occurred during 2005. Of the original grant pool of \$1.4 million previously announced for Alabama, \$322,000 is still available.

Applications will be accepted on the first of each month until grant funds are exhausted. It is expected the grant pool will be fully exhausted by the end of summer 2007; however, grant applications will be accepted until the end of 2007 if this is not the case.

Twenty-two counties in Alabama are eligible: Baldwin, Bibb, Choctaw, Clarke, Colbert, Cullman, Greene, Hale, Jefferson, Lamar, Lauderdale, Marengo, Marion, Mobile, Monroe, Perry, Pickens, Sumter, Tuscaloosa, Washington, Wilcox, and Winston.

To qualify for grant funds, a structure or archaeological site must be listed in the National Register of Historic Places or considered eligible for National Register listing according to criteria.

Grants are to provide disaster relief for expenses which were not reimbursed by insurance or other federal programs. No religious-use or federally-owned properties are eligible to receive these grant funds.

The purpose of this funding is to provide technical assistance and emergency repairs to historic and archaeological resources impacted by the wind and water damage caused by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. The maximum amount for an individual grant is \$100,000.

For more information and an application form, contact Elizabeth Brown at (334) 230-2667.

PRESERVATION REPORT

Alabama Historical Commission

Preservation Report is a bimonthly publication of the
ALABAMA HISTORICAL COMMISSION
468 South Perry Street / P. O. Box 300900
Montgomery, AL 36130-0900 / (334) 242-3184

James P. "Ike" Adams *Chair*
John A. Neubauer *Executive Director*
Tara Lanier *Editor*

Funded in part with funds from the National Park Service, Department of the Interior, but does not necessarily reflect its views. Regulations of the U.S. Department of the Interior prohibit unlawful discrimination in federally assisted programs on the basis of race, color, handicap, and/or national origin.

Any person who believes he or she has been discriminated against in any program, activity, or facility operated by a recipient of federal assistance should write to:

Director, Equal Opportunity Program / U. S. Department of the Interior
National Park Service / P. O. Box 37127 / Washington, D.C. 20013-7127

PRESERVATION REPORT
Alabama Historical Commission
468 South Perry Street
P. O. Box 300900
Montgomery, AL 36130-0900
ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

preserveALABAMA
ALABAMA HISTORICAL COMMISSION

40 YEARS PRESERVING ALABAMA

www.preserveala.org

Preserve, Protect, and Interpret Alabama's Historic Places

PRESORTED
STANDARD
U.S. Postage
PAID
Permit No. 109
Montgomery, AL